(b) what steps, if any, are being taken to expedite decision in these cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) and (b) As on 31.10.2006, 23 cases of mercy petitions involving 44 condemned prisoners under Article 72 of the Constitution for pardon, commutation, etc., against sentence of death are pending with the Government. Out of which 2 cases are pending for less than a year, 8 cases for one to three years and 13 cases over three years. 22 petitions filed before the President of India have been processed in the Ministry of Home Affairs and submitted to the Hon'ble President of India for taking a decision on the petitions. One petition is being processed in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Special cell for naxal problems

†799. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a Special Cell has been created under the Home Ministry for the naxalite problems;

(b) if so, the main functions of this Cell;

(c) whether any steps have been taken for development work in the area having naxalite problems; and

(d) if so, the details of those steps?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPARKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The set up in the Ministry of Home Affairs dealing with the naxal problem has been strengthened. The main functions of this set up will be to ensure periodic review and close monitoring of Action Plans drawn up by the naxal affected States to deal with the naxalite menace on both security and development fronts.

(c) and (d) The Government has been pursuing a multi-pronged approach to combat the naxal problem which, *inter alia,* includes focused attention on integrated socio-economic development in the naxal affected areas.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Besides, funds are provided under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) to the States for socio-economic development. The Central Government has also sanctioned Rs. 2475 crores under the Backward Districts Initiative (BDI) component of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY) to fill in the critical gaps and physical infrastructure in the naxal affected districts.

Promotion of lottery by States

800. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether various State Governments are promoting lottery in various forms;

(b) if so, the details with annual transaction involved in the system in monetary terms;

(c) whether there was an instance of a lottery show being rigged forcefully;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether a number of families have been ruined on account of such lotteries particularly single digit lotteries;

(f) whether Government are considering either to ban such lotteries and bring about some kind of regulations to govern all types of lotteries and similar forms of games; and

(g) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No such data is maintained centrally.

(c) to (e) The reported malpractices in the conduct of lotteries and its impact on the poorer sections of the society prompted the Government to enact the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998.

(f) to (g) The Lotteries (Prohibition) Bill, 1999 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on 23.12.1999 to completely ban lotteries which has also been considered by the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Home Affairs. A decision of such nature is taken by evolving a larger consensus on the issue.